

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00  
ICAE-00 INRE-00 AID-05 /057 W  
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O R 202057Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9905  
INFO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTIAGO 5421

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, CI  
SUBJECT: CABINET GROUP CENSORS GENERAL LEIGH

1. AT NOON JULY 20, INTERIOR MINISTER, SERGIO FERNANDEZ, ISSUED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "THE CABINET CONSTITUTED AS THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, PRESIDED OVER BY THE MINISTER OF INTERIOR, MET YESTERDAY AFTERNOON, WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 1978, IN ORDER TO CONSIDER STATEMENTS MADE BY A MEMBER OF THE JUNTA OF GOVERNMENT, AIR FORCE GENERAL GUSTAVO LEIGH GUZMAN TO A FOREIGN NEWSPAPER, AND WHICH ARE PUBLICLY KNOWN. AT THE END OF THIS MEETING, IT WAS AGREED TO INFORM GENERAL LEIGH THAT THE MINISTERS PRESENT UNANIMOUSLY DISAGREED WITH THE VIEWS EXPRESSED." (COMMENT: WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT AIR FORCE GENERAL MATTHEI, PUBLIC HEALTH MINISTER, AND A LEIGH SUPPORTER, WAS NOT AT THE MEETING. THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED RUMORS THAT NONE OF THE FIVE MILITARY MINISTERS WERE INVITED.)

2. THIS LATEST AND, FROM APPEARANCE, MOST SERIOUS CONFLICT BETWEEN THOSE WHO SUPPORT LEIGH AND PINOCHET SUPPORTERS STEMS FROM AN INTERVIEW THAT LEIGH GAVE TO A REPORTER FOR THE CORRIERA DELLA SERA OF ROME APPROXIMATELY TWO WEEKS AGO  
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AND WHICH WAS REPORTED IN THE PRESS HERE JULY 19. IN THAT INTERVIEW, LEIGH COVERED MAINLY OLD GROUND: THAT THE MILITARY MUST FIX A FIRM SCHEDULE FOR HANDING BACK POWER TO THE CIVILIANS; THAT THIS SHOULD BE NO LONGER THAN ADDITIONAL FIVE YEARS; THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO BEGIN WORK NOW ON A NEW STATUTE GOVERNING THE POLITICAL PARTIES AND ON ESTABLISHING A NEW ELECTORAL REGISTER. THERE WAS SOME VERY UNDISGUISED

CRITICISM OF PINOCHET ("UNFORTUNATELY, THE AUTHORITY, WHO OUGHT TO UNDERSTAND THESE THINGS BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE DOES NOT."), AND THERE WAS ALSO A NEW AND PERAHAPS VERY IMPORTANT ELEMENT. REFERRING TO THE LETELIER INVESTIGATION, LEIGH SAID THAT THE PROBLEM IS VERY DELICATE AND THAT HE COULD NOT IMAGINE ANY INVOLVEMENT OF CHILEAN MILITARY FORCES IN THE ASSASSINATION. IF, HOWEVER, IT WERE PROVED THAT THERE HAD BEEN SUCH INVOLVEMENT, HE WOULD RECONSIDER VERY SERIOUSLY HIS CONTINUED PARTICIPATION IN THE JUNTA.

3. THIS MORNING'S "EL MERCURIO" PRINTS THE VERBATIM TEXT OF A QUESTION AND ANSWER EXCHANGE WITH LEIGH JULY 19 ON A LOCAL RADIO STATION. IN HIS ANSWERS LEIGH ACKNOWLEDGES THE ACCURACY OF THE STATEMENTS ASCRIBED TO HIM BY THE ITALIAN JOURNALIST BUT CLAIMS THAT THERE WAS NOTHING NEW. HE ELABORATES ON THE SAME POINTS THAT WERE REPORTED ONLY SKETCHILY IN THE WIRE SERVICE NEWS STORY. THE INTERVIEWER THEN BROKE NEW GROUND, ASKING LEIGH WHAT HE THINKS OF "PINOCHETISMO" -- THE BANNER RAISED BY YOUTH LEADERS 10 DAYS AGO. LEIGH WAS CATEGORICAL IN REJECTING ANY SUCH PERSONALISTIC MOVEMENT, STATED THAT HE CANNOT BELIEVE THAT ANYBODY ELSE IS SERIUS ABOUT IT, AND PROFESSED CONFIDENCE THAT PINOCHET WILL HIMSELF DISOWN IT WITHIN "8 OR 10 DAYS."

4. COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN A RADIO REPORT THAT LEIGH WILL HAVE A STATEMENT TO MAKE LATER THIS AFTERNOON, AFTER  
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MEETING WITH AIR FORCE GENERALS. ON THE OTHER HAND, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY ONE OF THOSE GENERALS THAT LEIGH WILL NOT MAKE ANY REPLY TODAY. "LA SEGUNDA" THIS AFTERNOON SAYS LEIGH WILL MAKE A WRITTEN RESPONSE TOMORROW. REGARDLESS, LEIGH MUST BE ASSESSING HIS OPTIONS IN THE LIGHT OF THIS QUALITATIVE DEEPENING OF THE DIVIDE BETWEEN HIMSELF AND PINOCHET. WE WILL BE REPORTING BY SEPTTEL TOMORROW ON "PINOCHETISMO," AND THE POSSIBLE RELATIONSHIP OF YESTERDAY'S COUNCIL OF MINISTERS' STATEMENT TO THAT STILL-TENTATIVE MOVEMENT.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
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